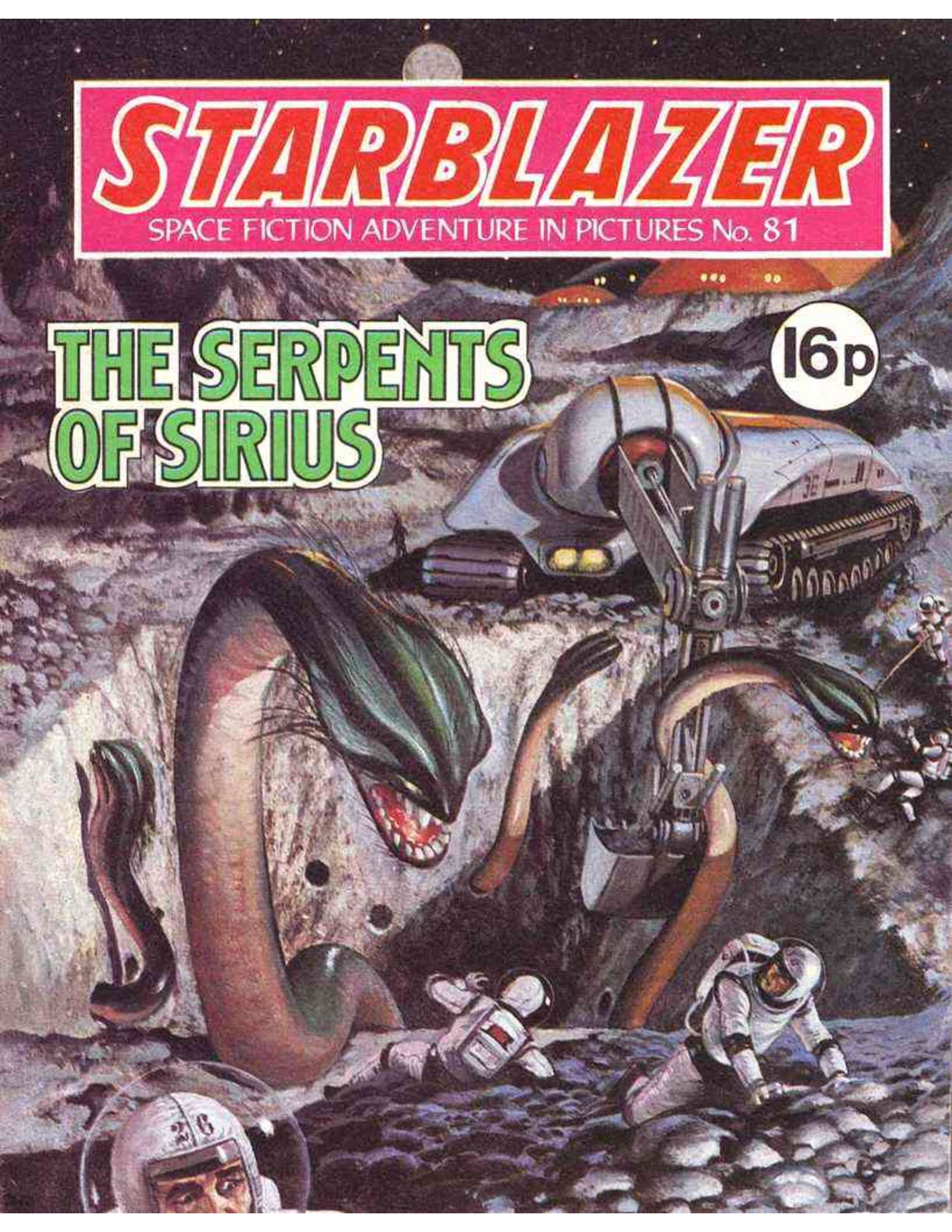
STARBLAZER

SPACE FICTION ADVENTURE IN PICTURES No. 81

THE SERPENTS OF SIRIUS

16p



THE FORCES OF GALAC-SQUAD PATROLLED THE STAR SYSTEMS OF THE GALATIC FEDERATION. A NETWORK OF STAR-GATES TOOK THEIR BATTLE-UNITS WHERE ACTION WAS NEEDED, WITH A SERIES OF HYPER-SPACE-JUMPS THAT CUT FLIGHT TIME TO A MINIMUM.

BUT FEDERATION SPACE STILL HAD AREAS MARKED " UNEXPLORED " ON THE GALATIC GAZATEER. WHEN THE UNKNOWN BECAME A THREAT, A GALAC-SQUAD HAD TO CALL OUT ITS SPECIALIST BRANCH OF FIGHTING-SCIENTISTS, THE MEN FROM FI-SCI, WITH THEIR TROUBLESHOOTER HADRON HALLEY.

THE SERPENTS OF SIRIUS

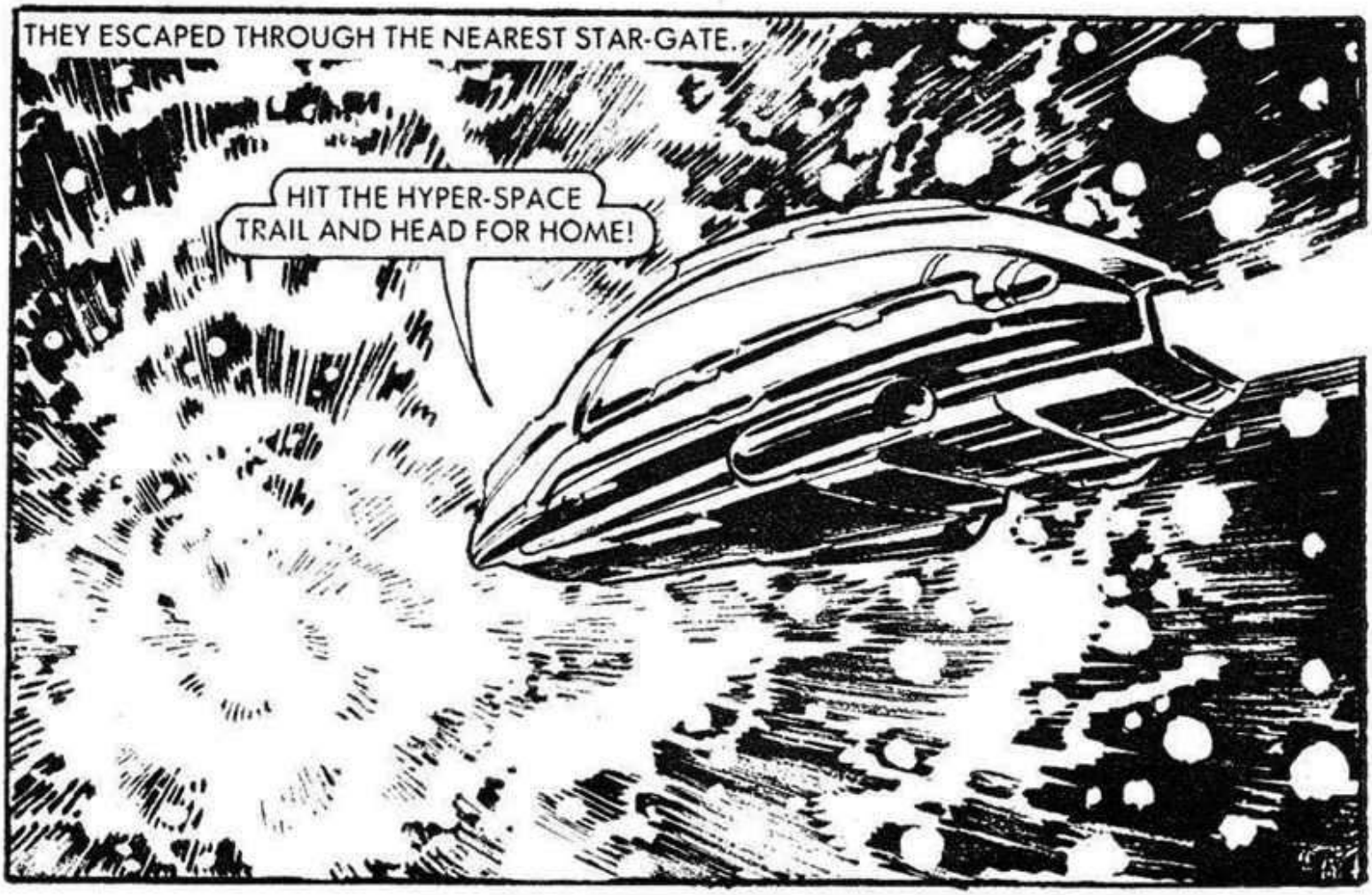
IN THE DOME, THE COMMANDER WAS WORKING FRANTICALLY TO TRY AND BEAT OFF THE ATTACKS BY A RACE WHO HAD BEEN CONDUCTING A HIT AND RUN BATTLE AGAINST EARTH FOR YEARS —

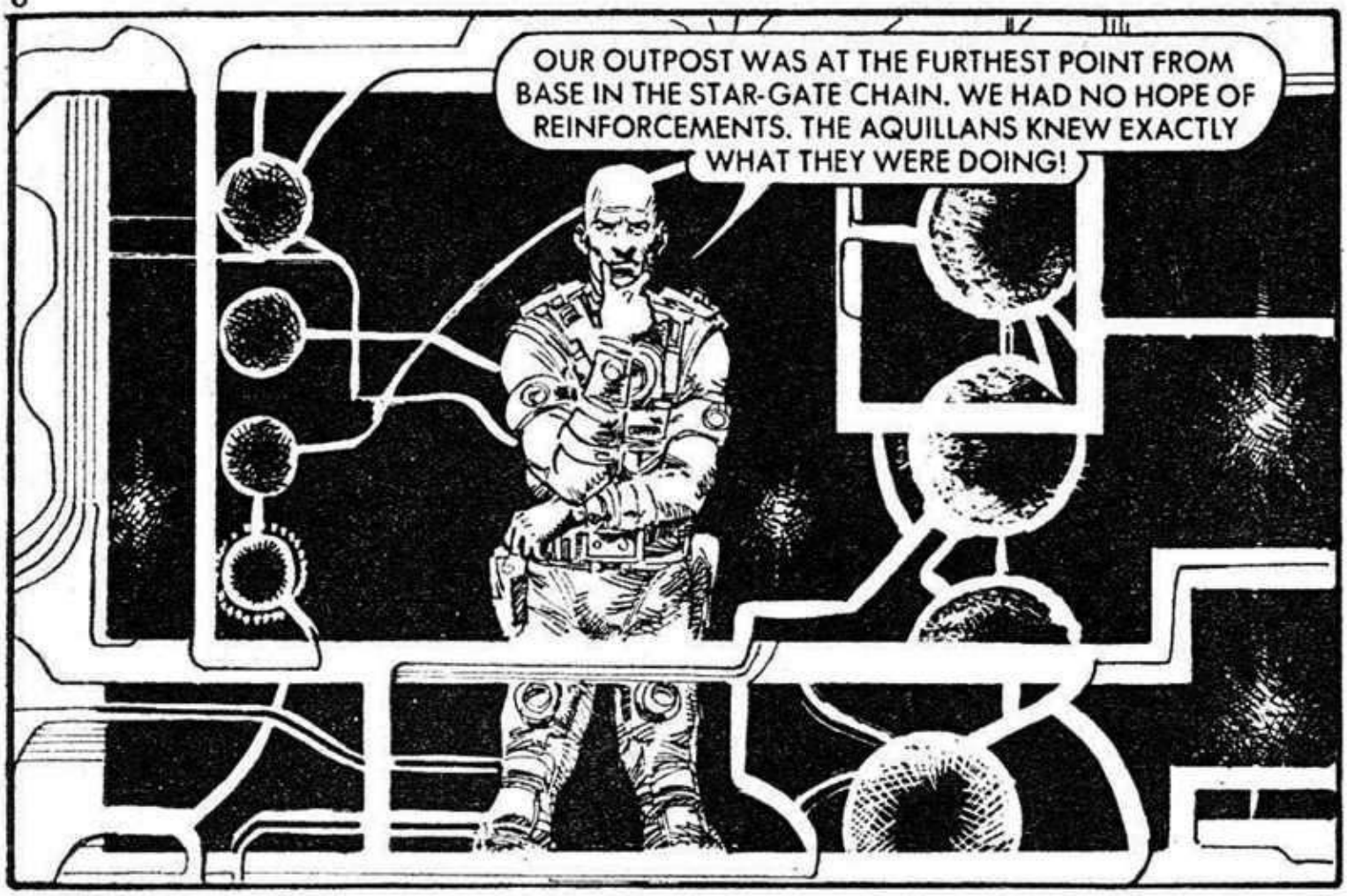
I'VE FED THE SITUATION REPORTS TO THE COMMAND COMPUTER —WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

ABANDON BASE—EVEN HIGH-TECHNOLOGY ADMITS IT'S HOPELESS. LET'S GO MEN!

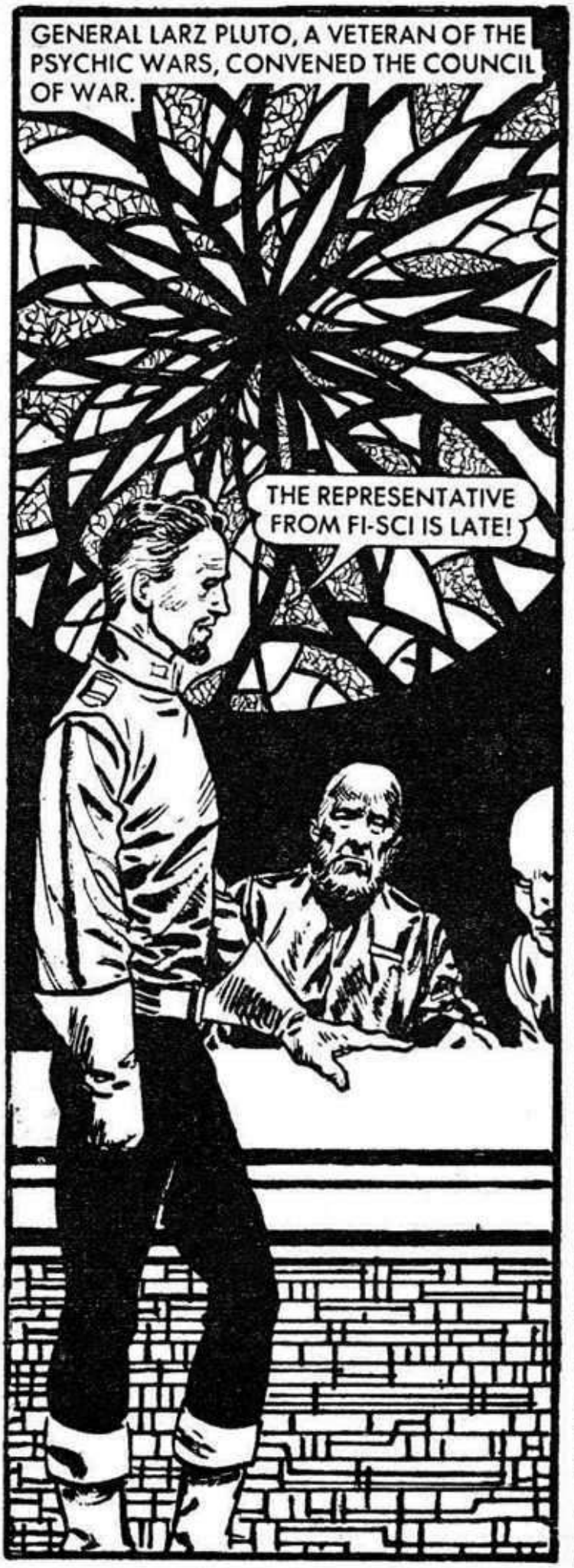
ABANDON BASE...

THE SURVIVING CREW LEFT IN A RESCUE SHUTTLE—
THEY JAMMED OUR SCREENS UNTIL THEY WERE RIGHT ON US, WE HAD NO CHANCE.

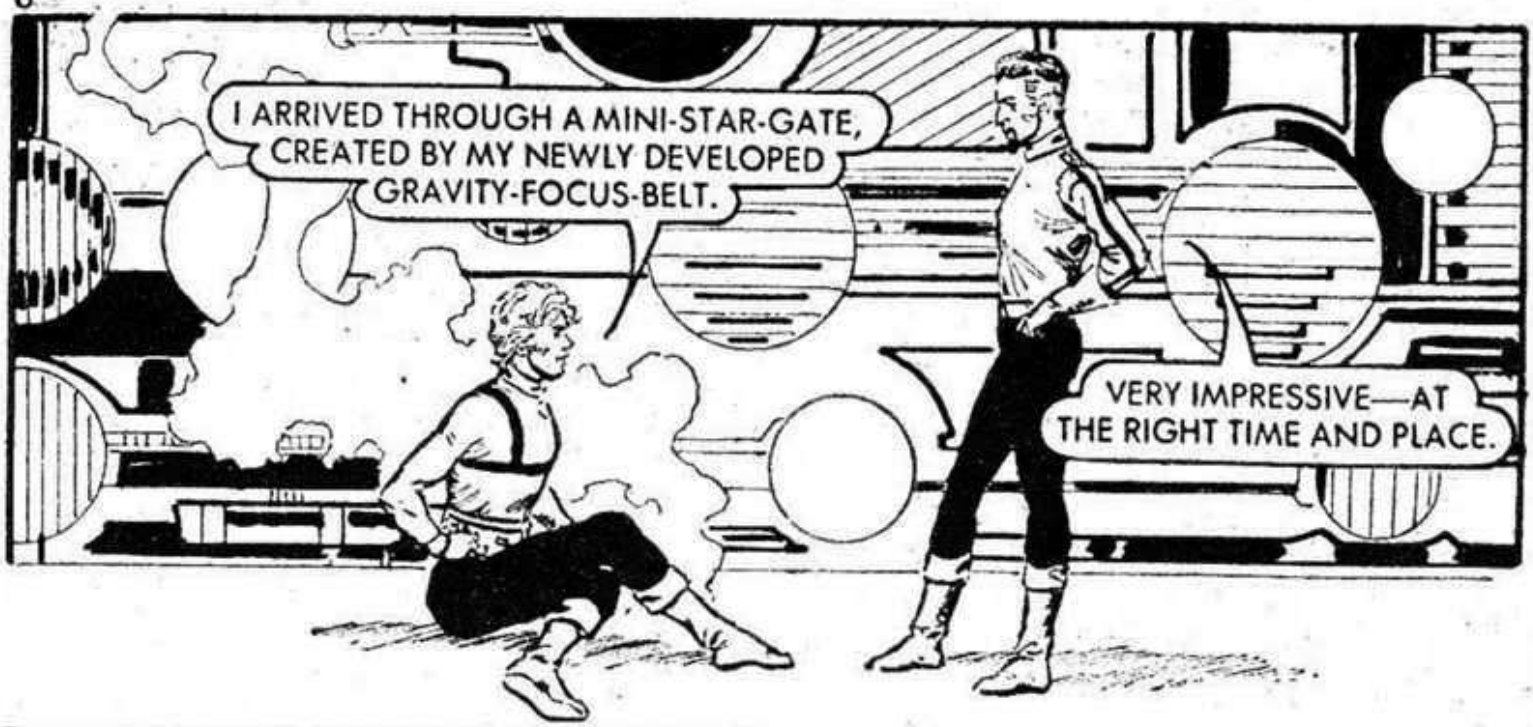

THEY ESCAPED THROUGH THE NEAREST STAR-GATE...
HIT THE HYPER-SPACE TRAIL AND HEAD FOR HOME!


OUR OUTPOST WAS AT THE FURTHEST POINT FROM BASE IN THE STAR-GATE CHAIN. WE HAD NO HOPE OF REINFORCEMENTS. THE AQUILLANS KNEW EXACTLY WHAT THEY WERE DOING!

STAR-COMM ONE, THE SPACIAL BASE OF GALAC-SQUAD, WAS SOON REACHED—
COMMANDER PAUL PRICE REQUESTS URGENT COUNCIL OF WAR.


GENERAL LARZ PLUTO, A VETERAN OF THE PSYCHIC WARS, CONVENED THE COUNCIL OF WAR.
THE REPRESENTATIVE FROM FI-SCI IS LATE!

SUDDENLY A BRIGHT LIGHT FLARED—
BY ALL THE STARS— IT'S HADRON HALLEY!
SORRY I'M LATE, GENERAL!


I ARRIVED THROUGH A MINI-STAR-GATE, CREATED BY MY NEWLY DEVELOPED GRAVITY-FOCUS-BELT.
VERY IMPRESSIVE—AT THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE.

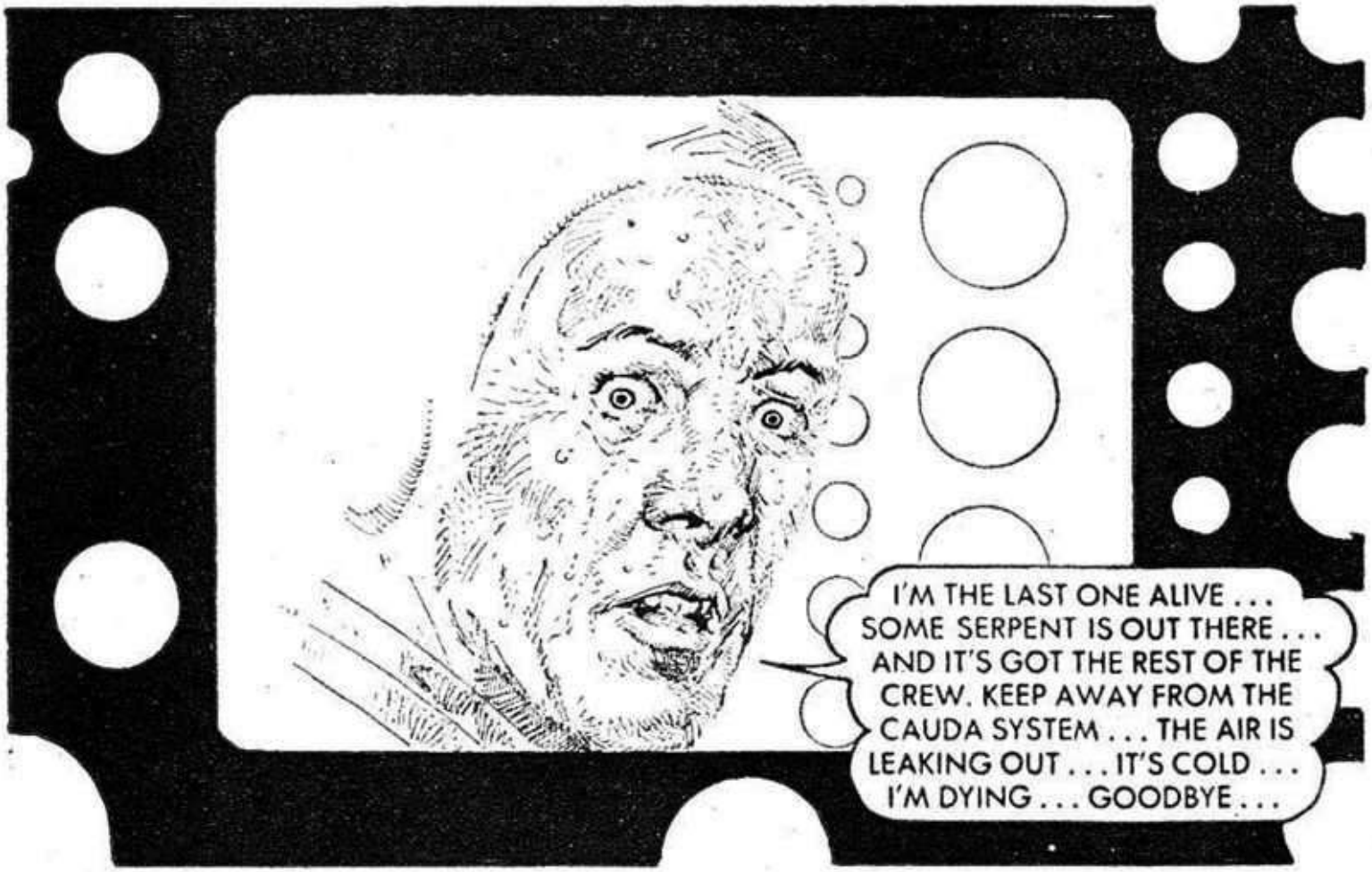
THE SERIOUS MILITARY PROBLEM ON THE AQUILLAN FRONTIER ARISES FROM THE LACK OF A SUITABLE STAR-GATE ROUTE FOR REINFORCEMENTS. HAS FI-SCI FOUND AN ANSWER?

AS YOU KNOW, STAR-GATES ARE CAUSED BY GRAVITY. THE FORCE-PLOT SHOWS A POSSIBLE SHORT-CUT GATE HERE IN THE LITTLE-KNOWN SYSTEM OF CAUDA.

THE GALACTIC GAZETEER SHOULD HAVE TAPES OF ANY PREVIOUS EXPLORATION, I'LL REQUEST THE RELEVANT REPORT.

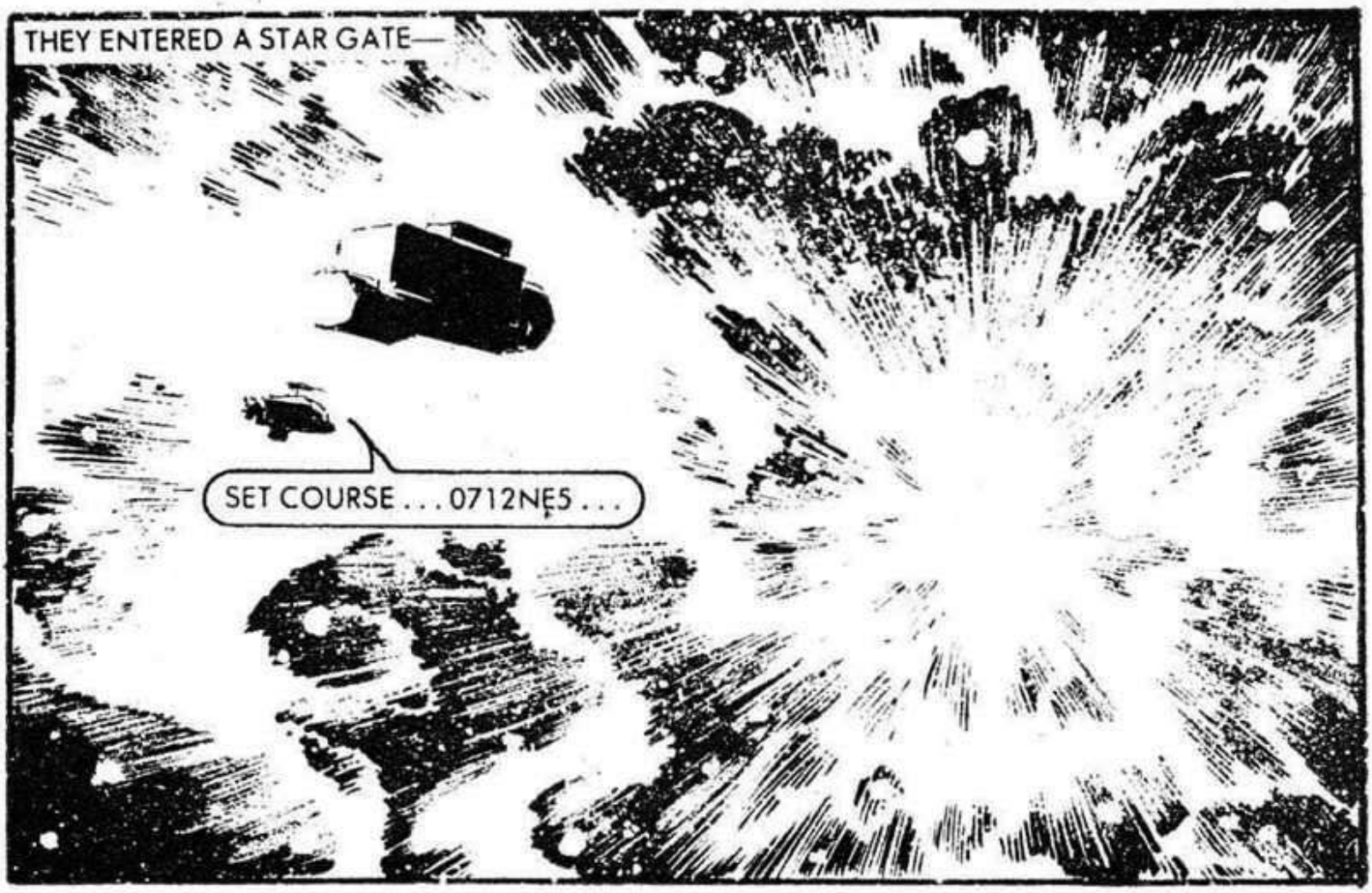
WITHIN SECONDS THE REQUESTED REPORT APPEARED—
THE ONLY SHIP EVER TO GO THERE NEVER RETURNED. THIS IS A RECORDING FROM THE SHIP'S FLIGHT RECORDER WHICH WAS AUTOMATICALLY FIRED TO EARTH.
THAT SHIP DATES FROM THE PIONEER DAYS OF GALACTIC EXPLORATION.

WHAT COULD HAVE CAUSED THAT DAMAGE?


I'M THE LAST ONE ALIVE . . . SOME SERPENT IS OUT THERE . . . AND IT'S GOT THE REST OF THE CREW. KEEP AWAY FROM THE CAUDA SYSTEM . . . THE AIR IS LEAKING OUT . . . IT'S COLD . . . I'M DYING . . . GOODBYE . . .

WE NEED THAT GATE. THE CAUDA SYSTEM, AND PLANET SIRIUS IN PARTICULAR, WILL BE THE IDEAL SITE TO OPEN UP A STAR GATE.

A HAND-PICKED BODY OF FI-SCI PLANETEERS, UNDER THE COMMAND OF HADRON HALLEY, WERE SOON ON COURSE FOR THE MYSTERIOUS STAR-GATE SIRIUS, IN THE CAUDA SYSTEM.
I WONDER WHAT KILLED THAT CREW?


THEY ENTERED A STAR GATE—
SET COURSE . . . 0712NE5 . . .

THE HYPER-SPACE-JUMP THROUGH INTO THE CAUDA SYSTEM INFLICTED AWESOME SPACIAL STRESS.

AFTER MANY SPACIALS TRAVEL THE EXPEDITION ARRIVED OVER SIRIUS—
THAT LOOKS A SUITABLE SITE. WE'LL SET UP THE GATE EXPANSION DEVICE THERE.
OUR SCREENS SHOW THIS SYSTEM FREE FROM HOSTILE SPACE-UNITS.

THE TWO CRAFT LANDED—
LET'S GET IT SET UP!

MUCH LATER—
OUR GEAR IS ALL UNLOADED. GOOD LUCK WITH THE RETURN JUMP!

WE'LL HAVE THE FOUNDATIONS READY BY THE TIME YOU RETURN WITH THE ACTUAL EXPANSION UNIT.

AS ONE CRAFT LEFT, A SMALL CRAFT ALSO TOOK OFF—
I'VE FIXED AN ORBITAL TRACK FOR OUR GUARD DUTIES.

THE SPACIAL SCANNERS SHOW NOTHING.

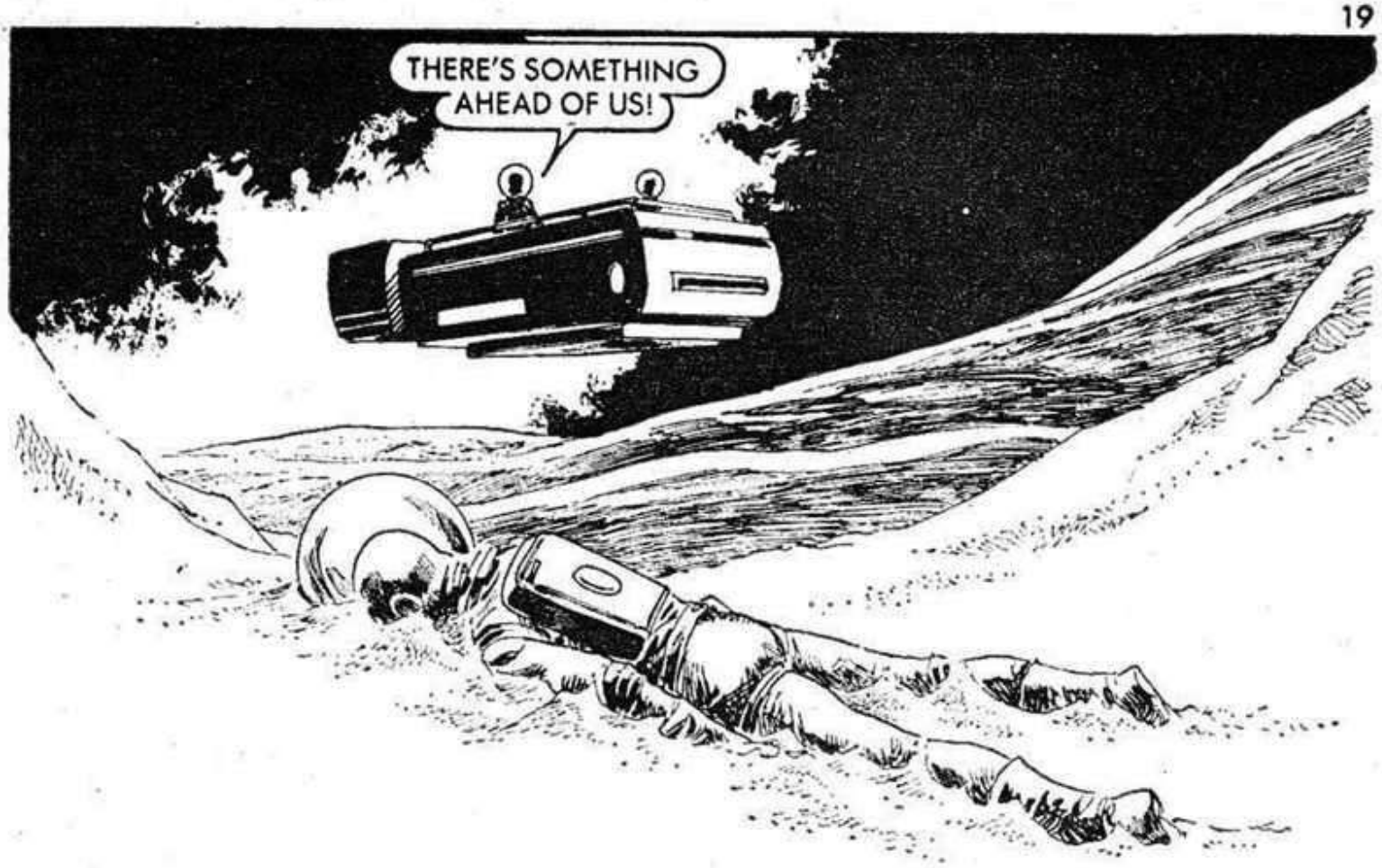
THE GALAC-SQUAD GUN-SHIP KEPT AN AUTOMATIC SCAN WATCH, WHILE EXCAVATION WORK FOR THE THE UNIT GOT UNDERWAY.
TIME'S UP ON THE FIRST SHIFT, TAKE A BREAK LADS!

IT'S TOUGH WORKING IN A PRESSURE SUIT. WE'LL NEED REGULAR REST PERIODS.

WE'RE A MAN SHORT. WHO'S MISSING?

SMALL—DEREK SMALL'S NOT BACK! I SAW HIM WITH A SEISMIC RECORDER.
WE'LL GO OUT IN PAIRS. HE COULD BE IN TROUBLE—HIS OXYGEN IS BOUND TO BE LOW BY NOW.

WE'LL COVER THIS SECTOR.
I'LL STEER THE SLEDGE! YOU KEEP A LOOKOUT.


THERE'S SOMETHING AHEAD OF US!

IT'S SMALL . . . BRING THE MEDBOX.

JUPE!!

HOW ON EARTH DID THIS HAPPEN?

THERE'S SOME SORT OF TRAIL HERE.
FOLLOW IT!

THE TRAIL LEADS TO THAT MOUND.
IT LOOKS SORT OF VOLCANIC IN ORIGIN.

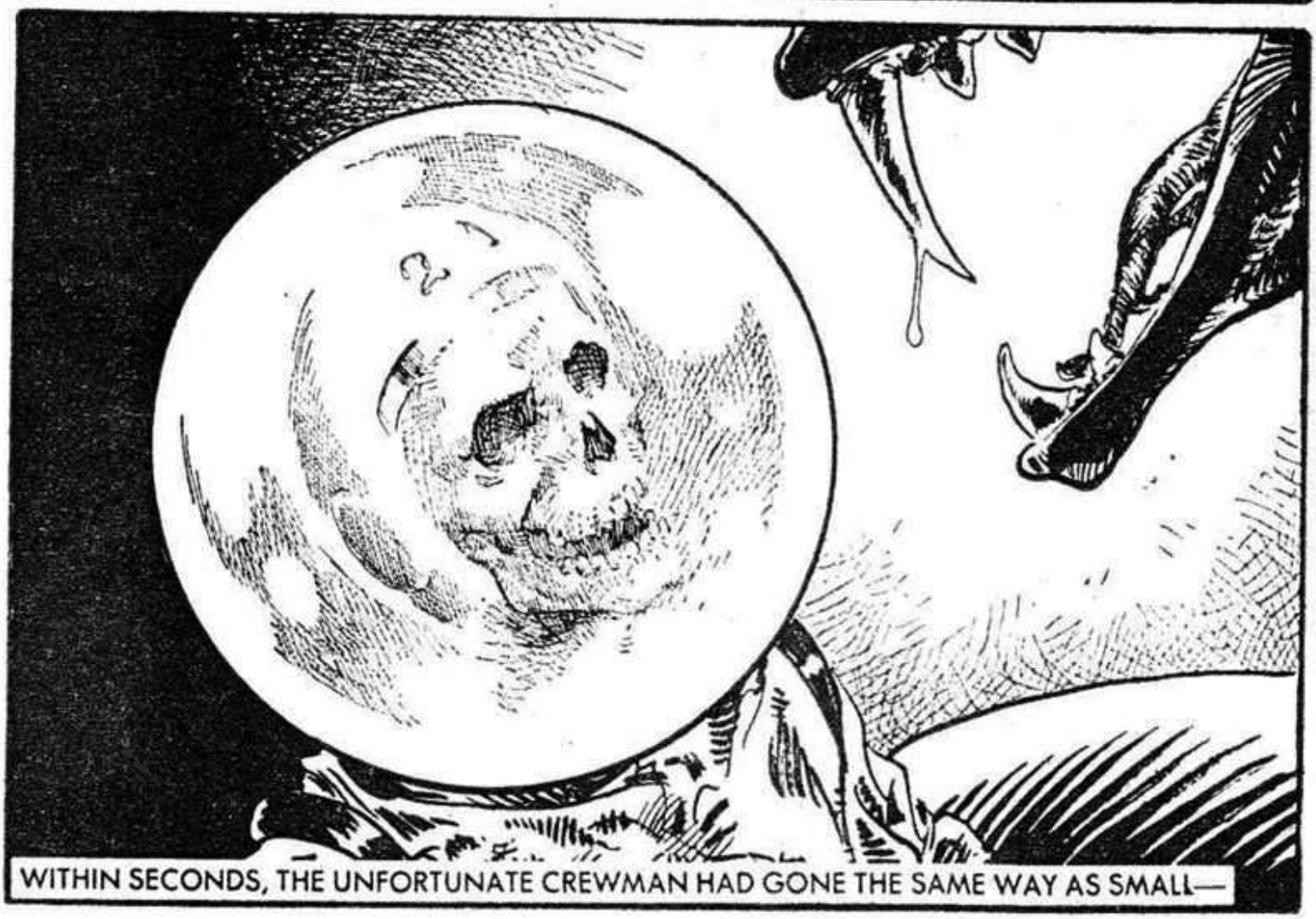
SUDDENLY—
JUPE!

SET PHASERS FOR STUN!
CAN'T MOVE . . .

THE PARTICLE-BEAM IS HAVING NO EFFECT. IT MUST HAVE A HIDE AS THICK AS AN ARMOURED SPACESUIT! I'LL SET IT TO KILL!

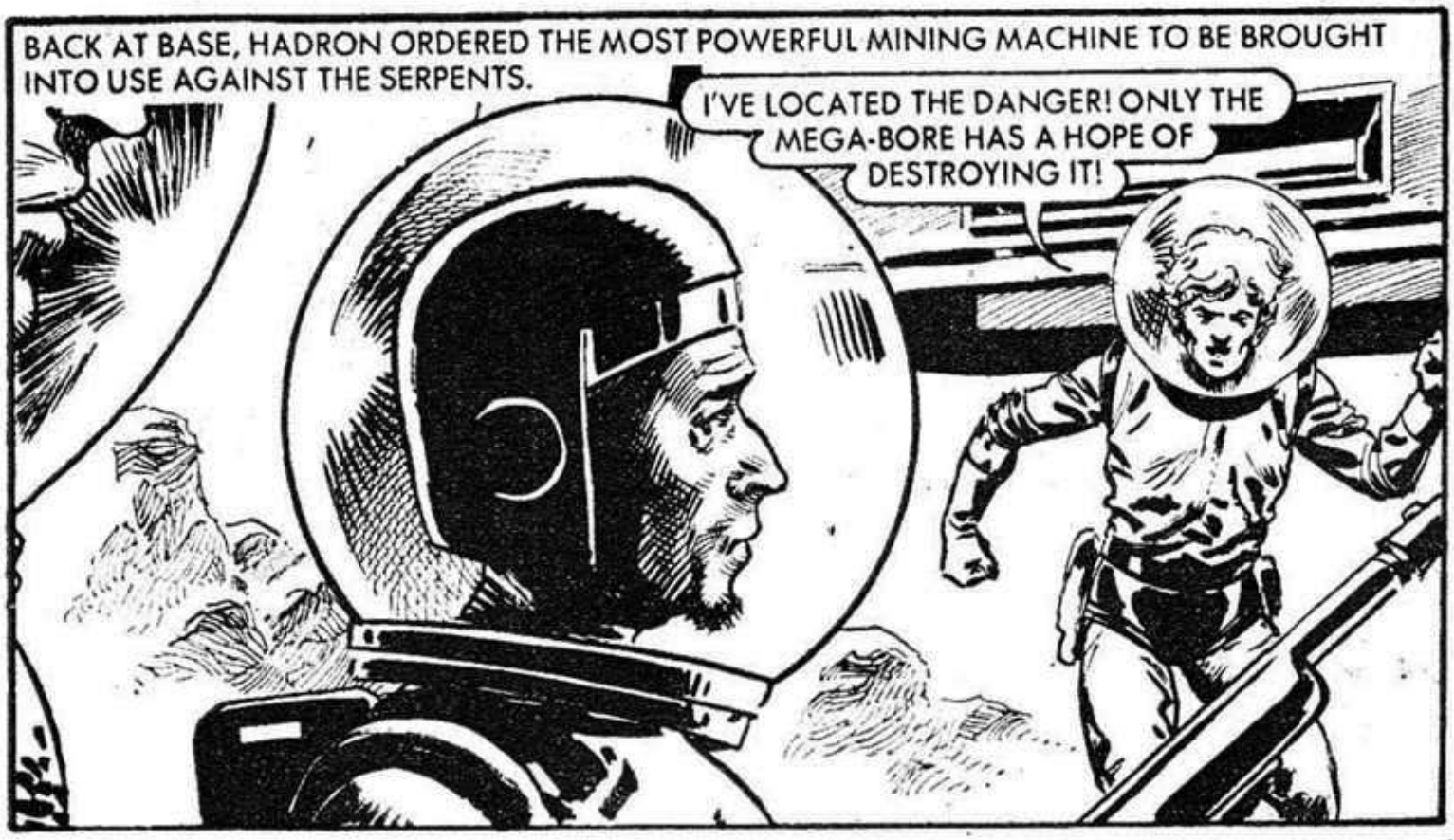
IT'S GOING TO . . .
2
1

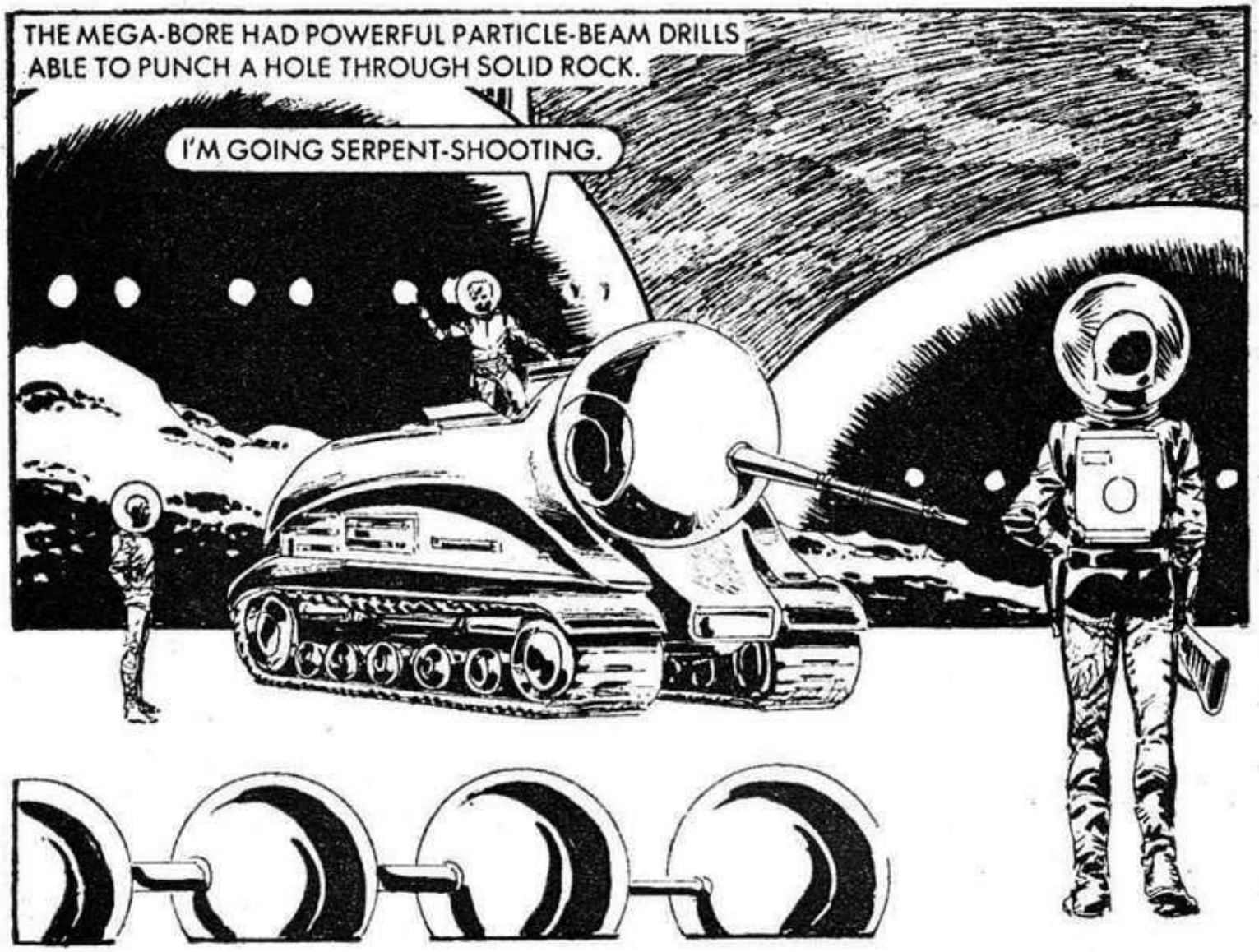
...AAAARGH!


WITHIN SECONDS, THE UNFORTUNATE CREWMAN HAD GONE THE SAME WAY AS SMALL—

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO NOW EXCEPT GET HELP!

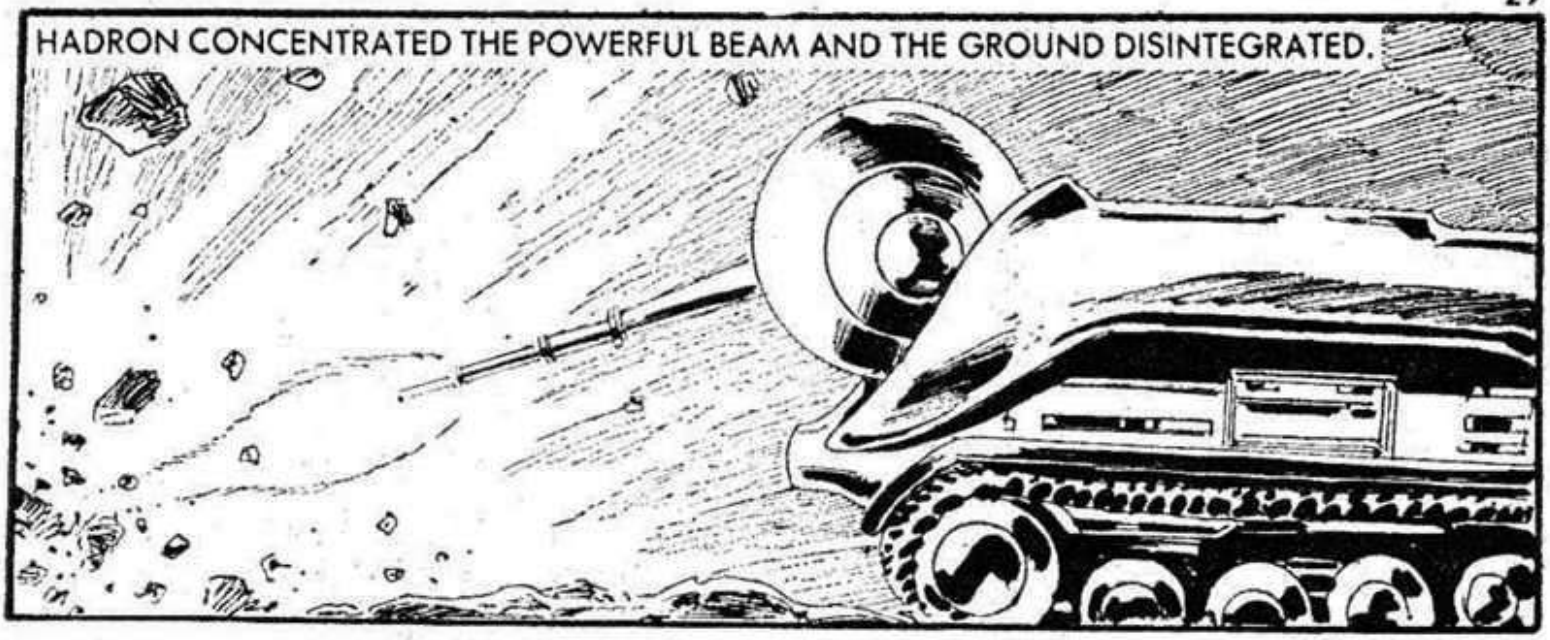
AS HADRON SPED AWAY—
SO THE WARNING ABOUT SERPENTS WAS REAL.

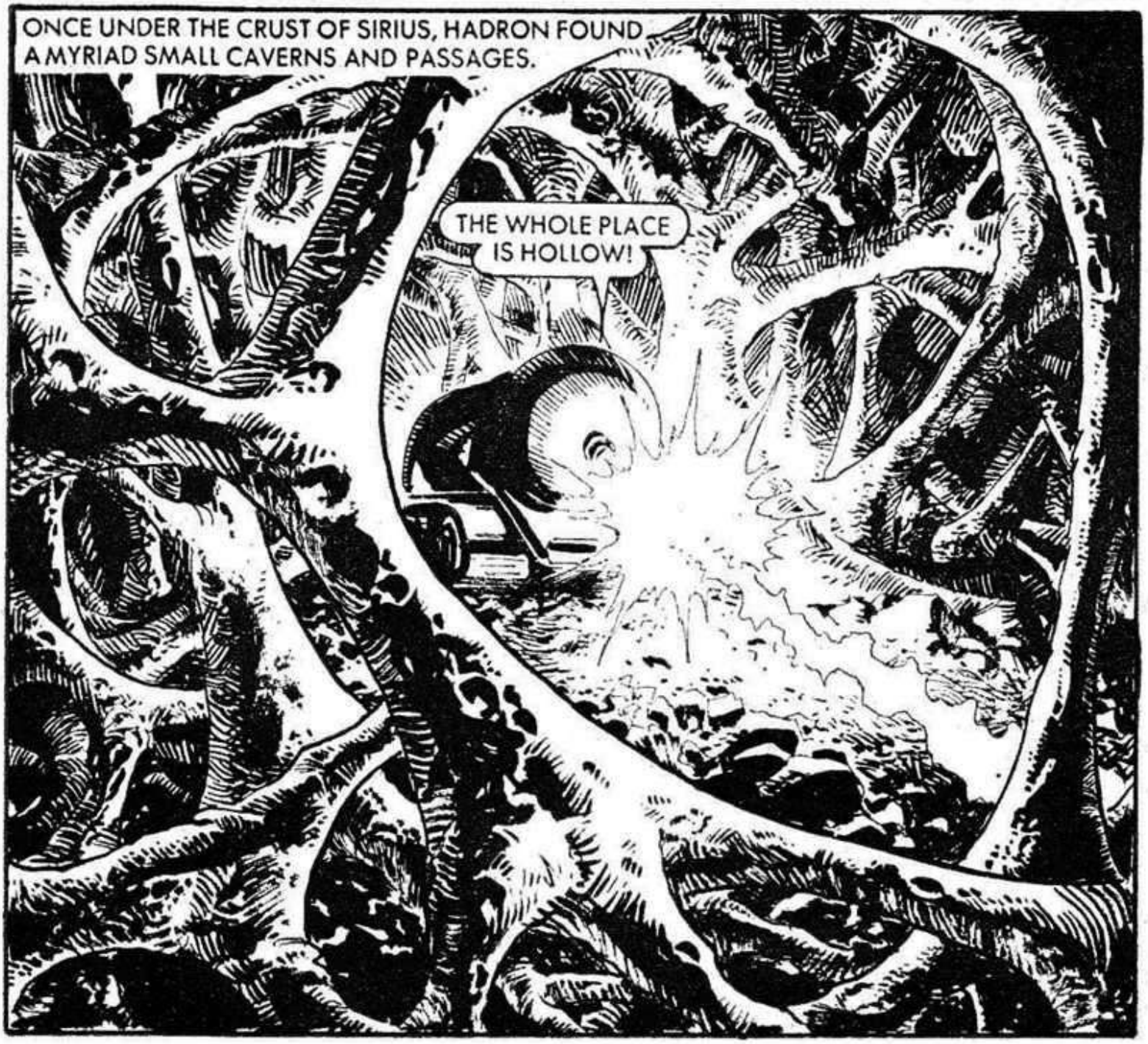

BACK AT BASE, HADRON ORDERED THE MOST POWERFUL MINING MACHINE TO BE BROUGHT INTO USE AGAINST THE SERPENTS.
I'VE LOCATED THE DANGER! ONLY THE MEGA-BORE HAS A HOPE OF DESTROYING IT!

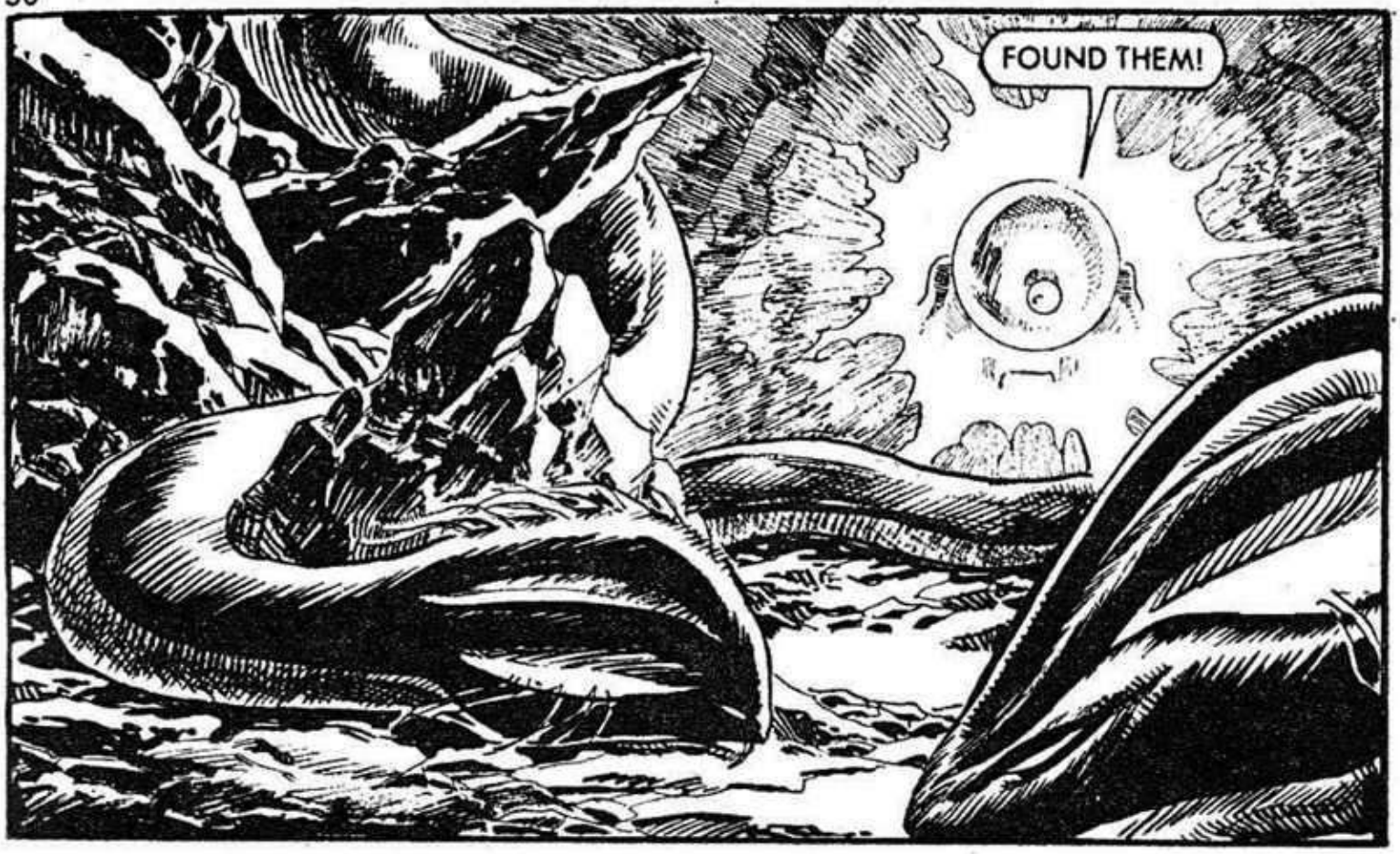

THE MEGA-BORE HAD POWERFUL PARTICLE-BEAM DRILLS ABLE TO PUNCH A HOLE THROUGH SOLID ROCK.
I'M GOING SERPENT-SHOOTING.

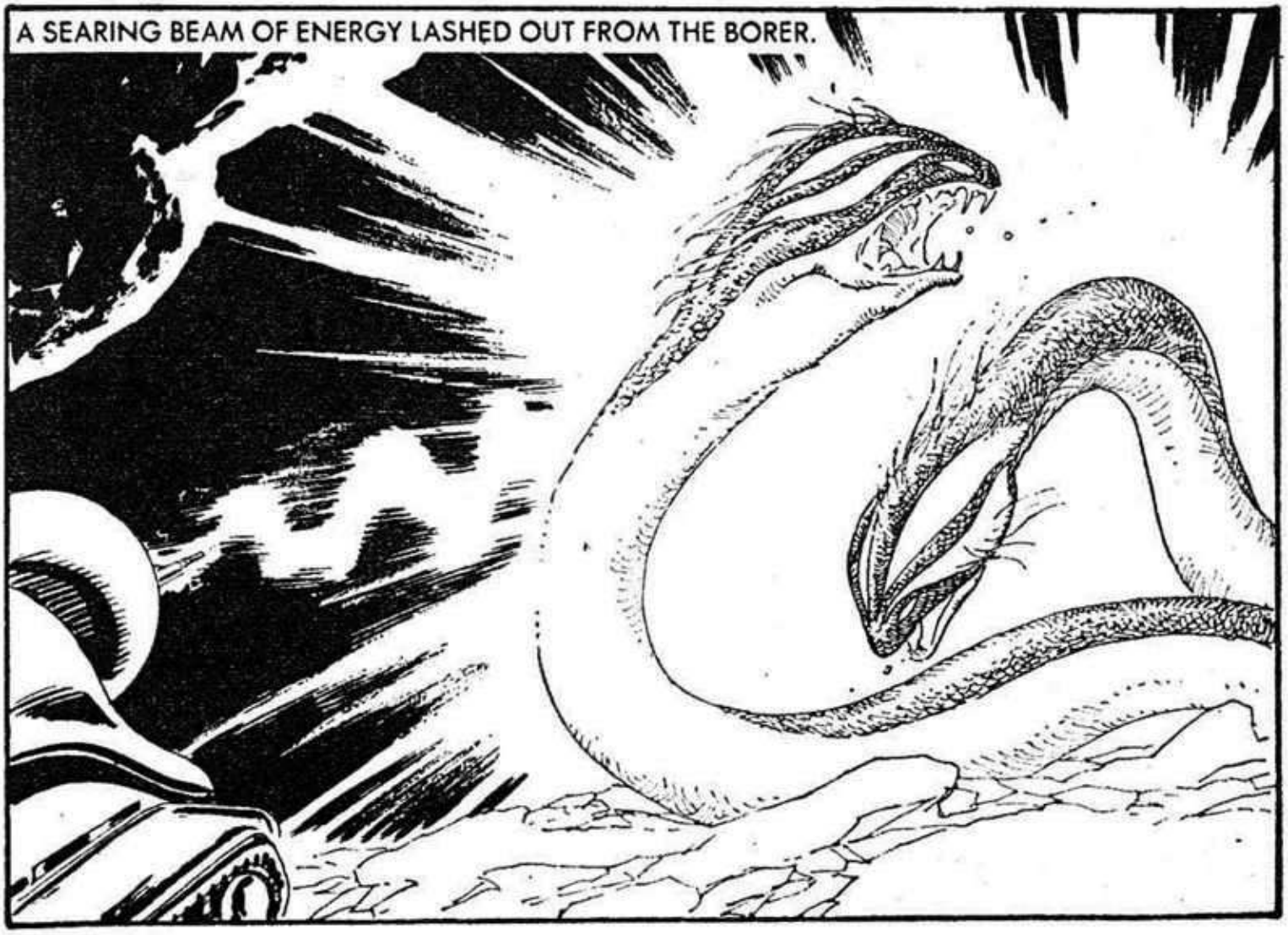
THOSE MONSTERS MUST BE WIPED OUT.

IT'S TIME I WENT UNDERGROUND.


HADRON CONCENTRATED THE POWERFUL BEAM AND THE GROUND DISINTEGRATED.

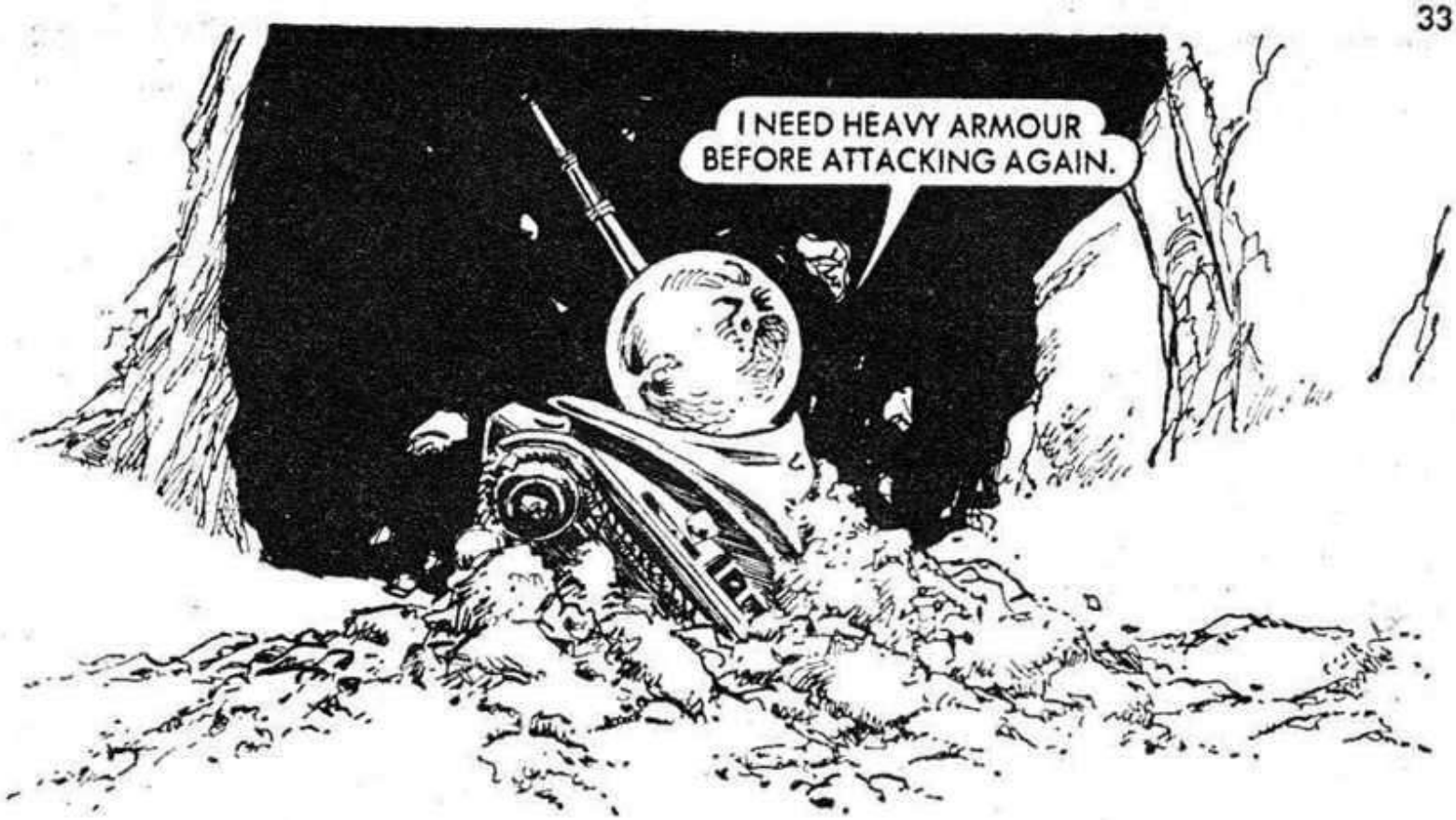

ONCE UNDER THE CRUST OF SIRIUS, HADRON FOUND A MYRIAD SMALL CAVERNS AND PASSAGES.
THE WHOLE PLACE IS HOLLOW!


FOUND THEM!


A SEARING BEAM OF ENERGY LASHED OUT FROM THE BORER.

HADRON'S ATTACK ROUSED THE WHOLE NEST OF SERPENTS—
JUPE! THE GUIDANCE SYSTEM'S GONE HAYWIRE!
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THOSE BEASTS HIT SOMETHING VITAL!

IT WON'T LET ME GO.
THE ONLY THING TO DO IS SHOOT MY WAY OUT!


I NEED HEAVY ARMOUR BEFORE ATTACKING AGAIN.

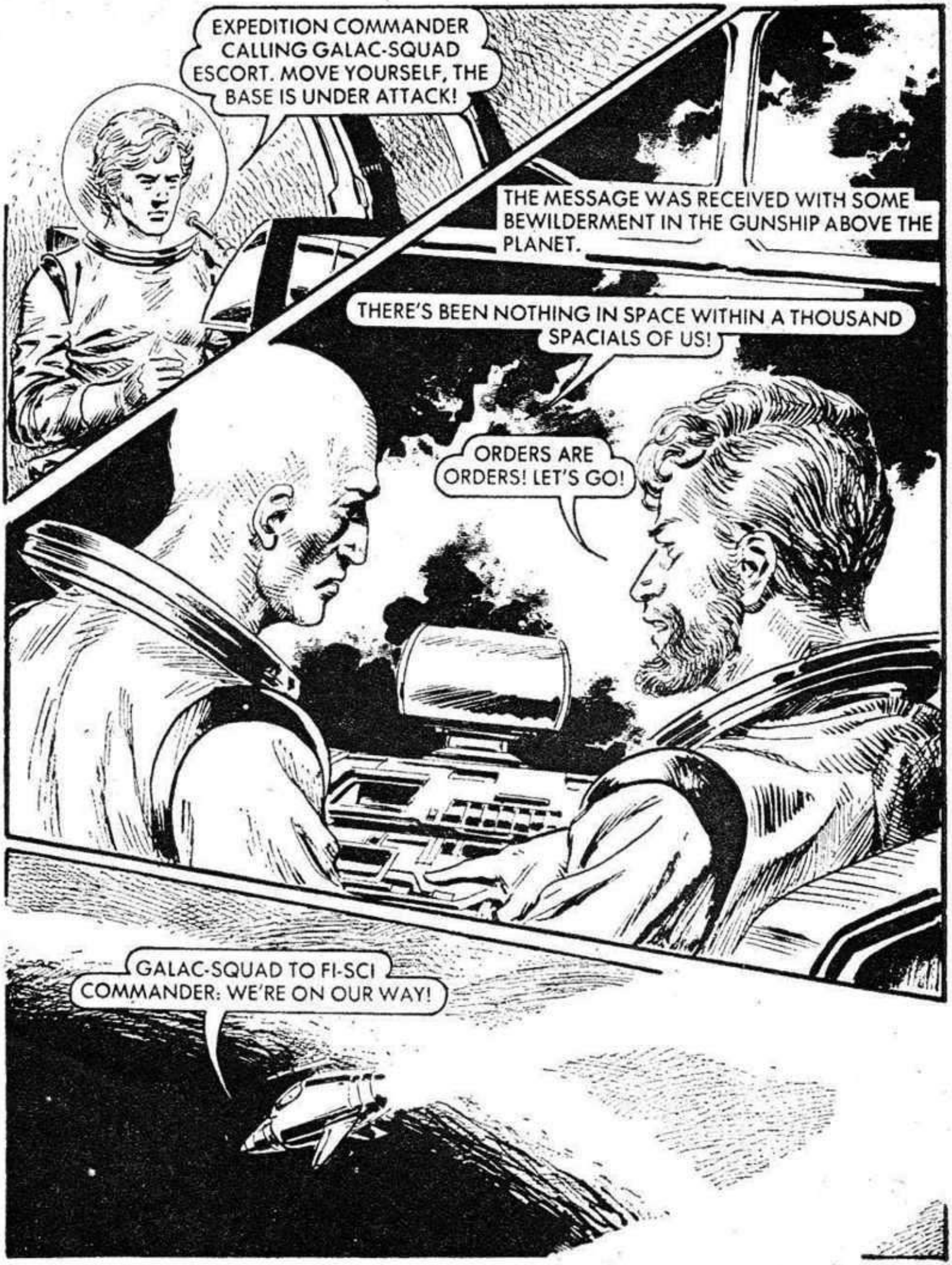
BACK AT THE BASE—
THERE ARE MASSES OF THOSE THINGS!
AND THEY'VE FOLLOWED!
GET EVERY AVAILABLE WEAPON INTO USE.

CONCENTRATE YOUR FIRE ON SINGLE TARGETS.
THAT'S ONE OF THEM!
THERE ARE TOO MANY TO HOLD AT THE BARRICADE! RETREAT TO THE MAIN DOME.

3/2
WE DON'T STAND A CHANCE!

KEEP YOUR HELMETS ON! THE DOME SKIN WON'T HOLD OUT AGAINST THEM.
3/0

CONCENTRATE YOUR FIRE AGAIN!
GOT IT! BUT THERE MUST BE ANOTHER HUNDRED OUT THERE.


EXPEDITION COMMANDER CALLING GALAC-SQUAD ESCORT. MOVE YOURSELF, THE BASE IS UNDER ATTACK!
THE MESSAGE WAS RECEIVED WITH SOME BEWILDERMENT IN THE GUNSHIP ABOVE THE PLANET.
THERE'S BEEN NOTHING IN SPACE WITHIN A THOUSAND SPACIALS OF US!
ORDERS ARE ORDERS! LET'S GO!
GALAC-SQUAD TO FI-SCI COMMANDER: WE'RE ON OUR WAY!

BY THE STARS, WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS?
I DON'T KNOW . . . BLAST THEM.

GOT THEM!

THAT'S ROCKED THE BRUTES BACK ON THEIR TAILS!

ANOTHER COUPLE OF RUNS SHOULD FINISH THEM!

LOOK AT THAT—THEY'RE TAKING OFF!

CHANGE COURSE!
TOO LATE—BLAST 'A WAY THROUGH!

IT'S GOT US! FIRE THE BOOSTERS OR THE WEIGHT WILL DRAG US DOWN!

I CAN'T SHAKE IT OFF!

I'LL TRY TO DISLODGE THE THING WITH A SHOT OF LASER NEEDLE FIRE!

WE'RE LEAKING SERVO FUEL!

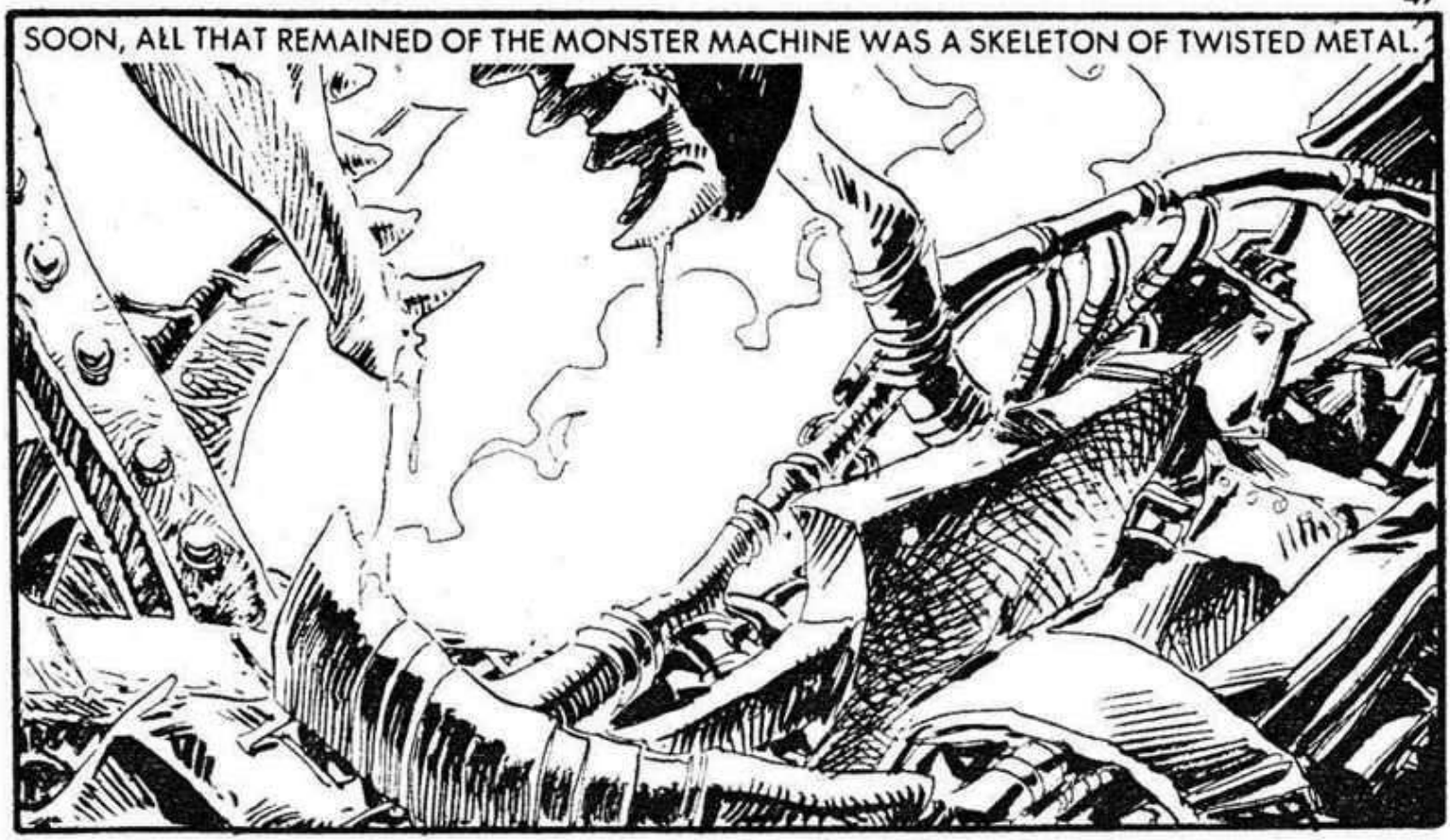
THE HEAT OF THE LASER NEEDLE BEAM IGNITED VOLATILE FUMES LEAKING FROM THE WRECKED SERVO UNIT.

WE'VE GOT TROUBLE! EVERY WARNING LIGHT HAS HIT RED!

THE CONTROLS WON'T RESPOND, I CAN'T GET OUR NOSE TO LIFT . . .
POOR DEVILS—THEY NEVER STOOD A CHANCE! THERE GOES OUR LAST CHANCE OF SURVIVAL.
NOT QUITE!
THE SERPENTS FORGOT US WHEN THE GUNSHIP ATTACKED. IF WE CAN DISTRACT THEM AGAIN, THERE'S A CHANCE OF ESCAPE.

GRAB ANY PORTABLE EQUIPMENT—AND BE READY TO MOVE OUT.
LET'S SEE WHAT THE SERPENTS MAKE OF THIS LITTLE LOT.

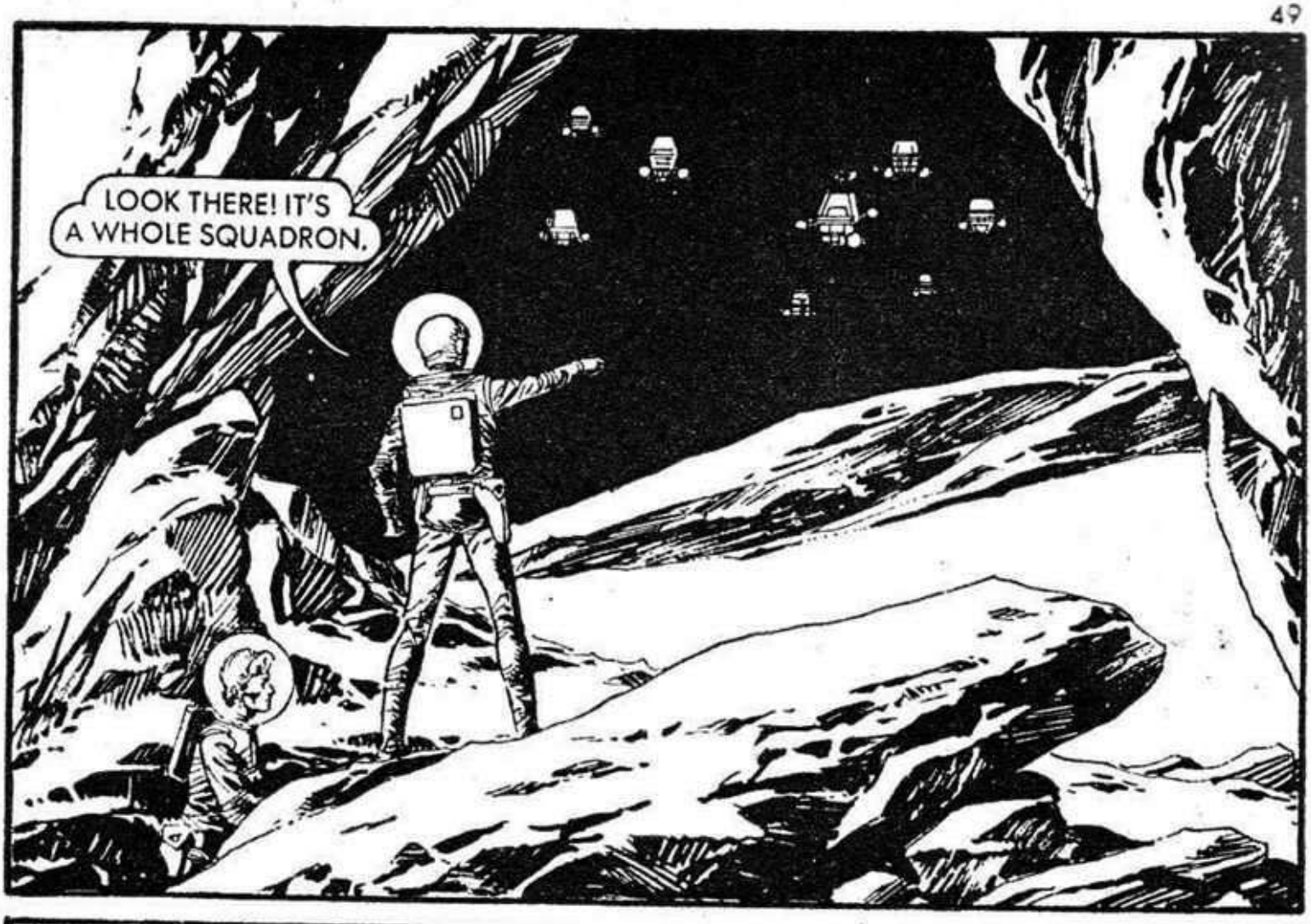
MOVE OUT NOW! RENDEZVOUS INSIDE ALPHA CRATER!
HADRON LEAPT CLEAR OF THE BORER AS IT MOVED FORWARD. THE SERPENTS ATTACKED IT INSTANTLY—


SOON, ALL THAT REMAINED OF THE MONSTER MACHINE WAS A SKELETON OF TWISTED METAL.

BUT THE SURVIVORS WERE SAFELY OUT OF SIGHT.
THEY SEEM TO BE LOSING INTEREST AND HEADING BACK FOR THEIR BURROW.

I'LL RISK THE MOVEMENT OF LAUNCHING A MESSAGE CAPSULE. IT'S VITAL WE WARN THE BASE SHIP BEFORE IT RETURNS HERE!
THE LAUNCHER WAS CAPABLE OF FIRING OFF A MESSAGE CAPSULE WHICH COULD CARRY MESSAGE TAPES THROUGH THE STAR-GATES, THUS OVERCOMING THE SPEED OF LIGHT REQUIREMENT FOR RADIO MESSAGES.

NOW THAT THE SERPENTS HAVE DISPERSED, WE CAN SALVAGE SOME MORE EQUIPMENT FROM THE CAMP.
WAIT! THERE'S SPACIAL DISPLACEMENT TAKING PLACE. THE BASE SHIP MUST BE BACK ALREADY.


LOOK THERE! IT'S A WHOLE SQUADRON.

GET DOWN! THEY'RE AQUILLAN BATTLE UNITS!

THE ASTEROID ERUPTED WITH THE EXPLOSIVE SAVAGERY OF AN AQUILLAN ATTACK.

THE SERPENTS DID US A FAVOUR GETTING US CLEAR OF THAT LITTLE LOT!
SEARCH OUT AND DESTROY ANY SURVIVORS!

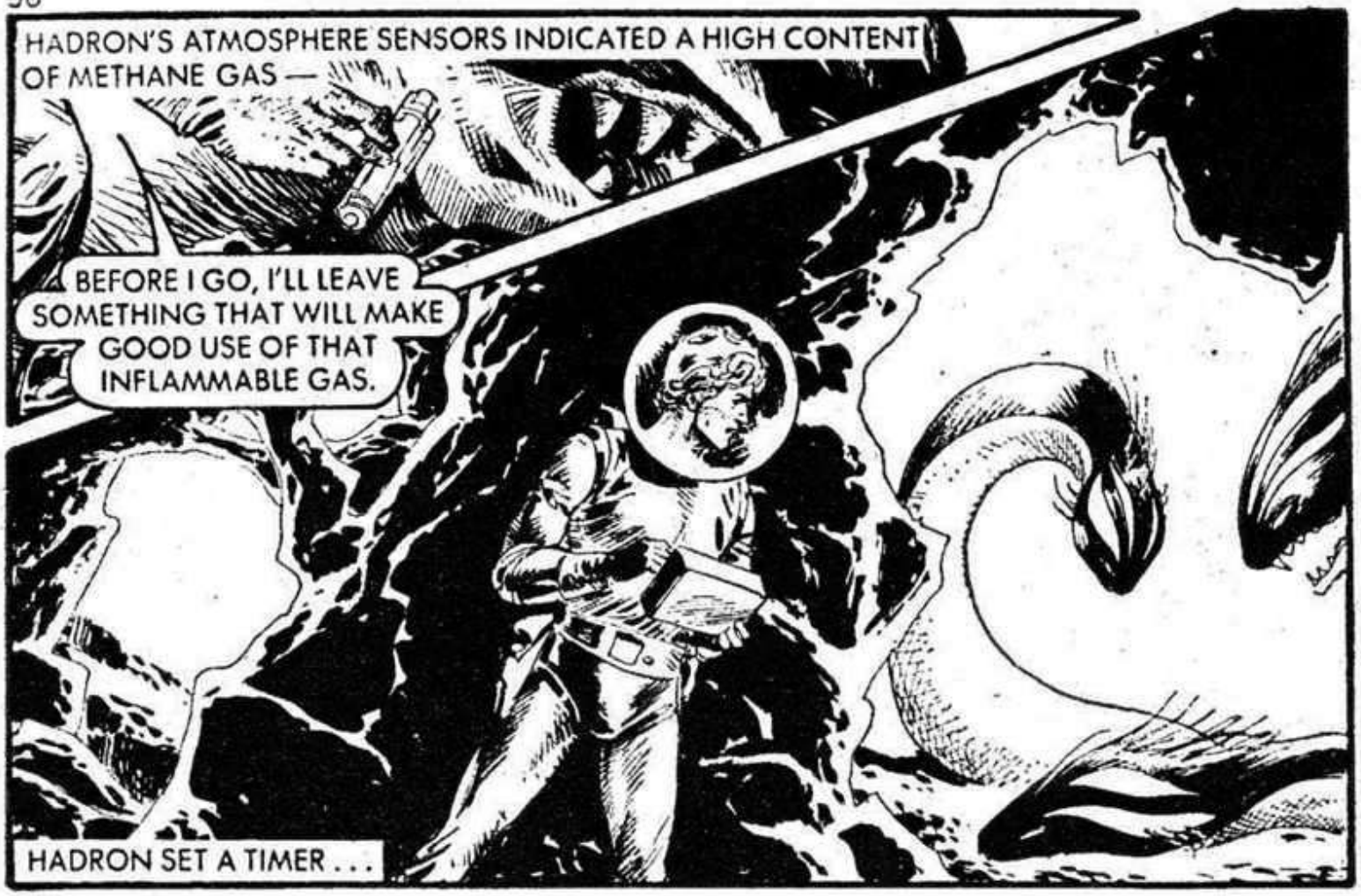
THERE ARE NO ENEMY UNITS HERE! WE WILL ESTABLISH OUR OWN BASE!

OUR BASE SHIP WILL RUN RIGHT INTO THIS LITTLE LOT AND WE'VE NO MORE MESSAGE DROGUES TO SEND! IT'S TIME I USED MY FI-SCI BAG OF TRICKS.

I'M OFF TO ROUSE THOSE SERPENTS! KEEP A SCAN/TRANSMIT BEAM ON ME CONSTANTLY WHILE I'M AWAY.

AFTER A LONG TREK TO AVOID THE AQUILLAN CAMP, HADRON ARRIVED AT THE SERPENTS' BURROW.
MY SUIT SENSORS ARE REGISTERING AN ATMOSPHERE DOWN HERE. THE SERPENTS BREATHE LIKE ANY OTHER LIFE FORM.

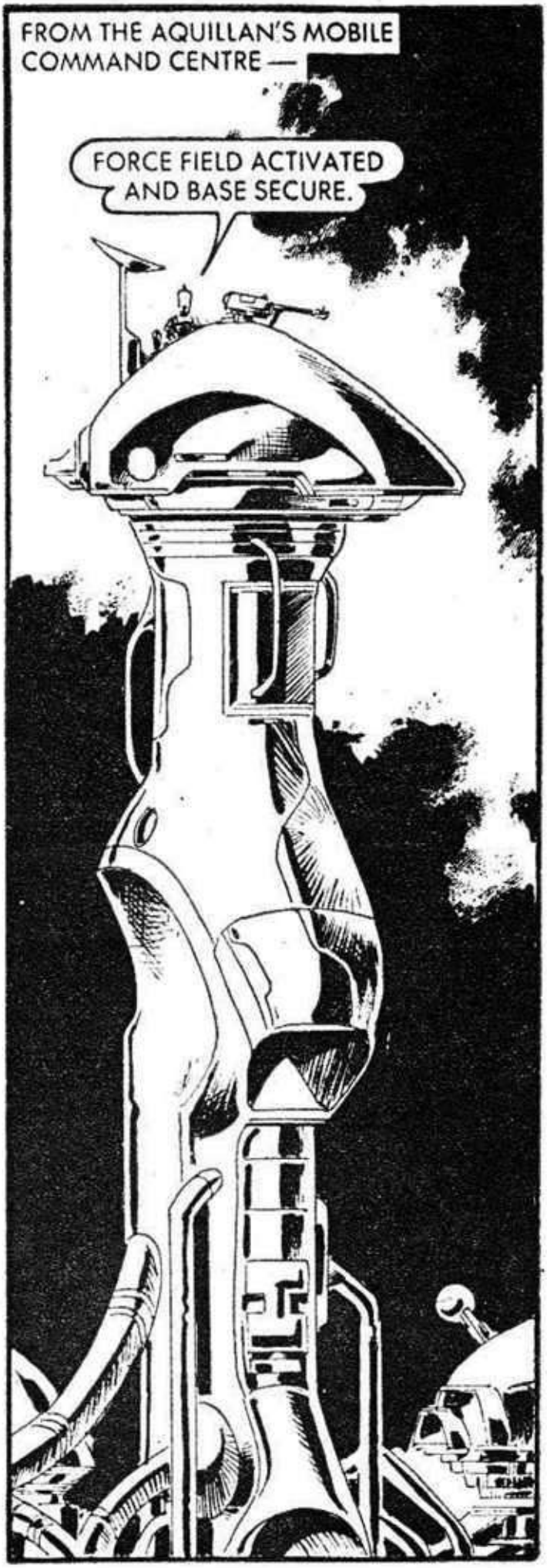
JUPE! A SERPENT!
ONLY HADRON'S REACTIONS SAVED HIM—
GILLS! THEY MUST TAKE IN AIR WHEN THEY'RE BELOW GROUND — THAT WILL BE A WEAK SPOT.
MY EXTERNAL SUIT MICROPHONE IS PICKING UP BAD VIBRATIONS. I'VE GOT TO TAKE COVER!


HADRON'S ATMOSPHERE SENSORS INDICATED A HIGH CONTENT OF METHANE GAS —
BEFORE I GO, I'LL LEAVE SOMETHING THAT WILL MAKE GOOD USE OF THAT INFLAMMABLE GAS.
HADRON SET A TIMER . . .

. . . WHICH IGNITED THE GAS ONCE HE WAS FREE.

THIS IS WHERE I USE THE SCAN/ TRANSMIT BEAM TO MAKE MY GETAWAY . . .
. . . THROUGH MY OWN PERSONAL STAR-GATE!
HADRON ARRIVED BACK AT THE PLACE HE'D LEFT THE OTHERS —
I'VE STIRRED UP THE SERPENTS' NEST. RIGHT NOW THEY WILL BE HELL-BENT ON REVENGE AND THE AQUILLANS SHOULD BE THE FIRST TARGET THEY SEE!

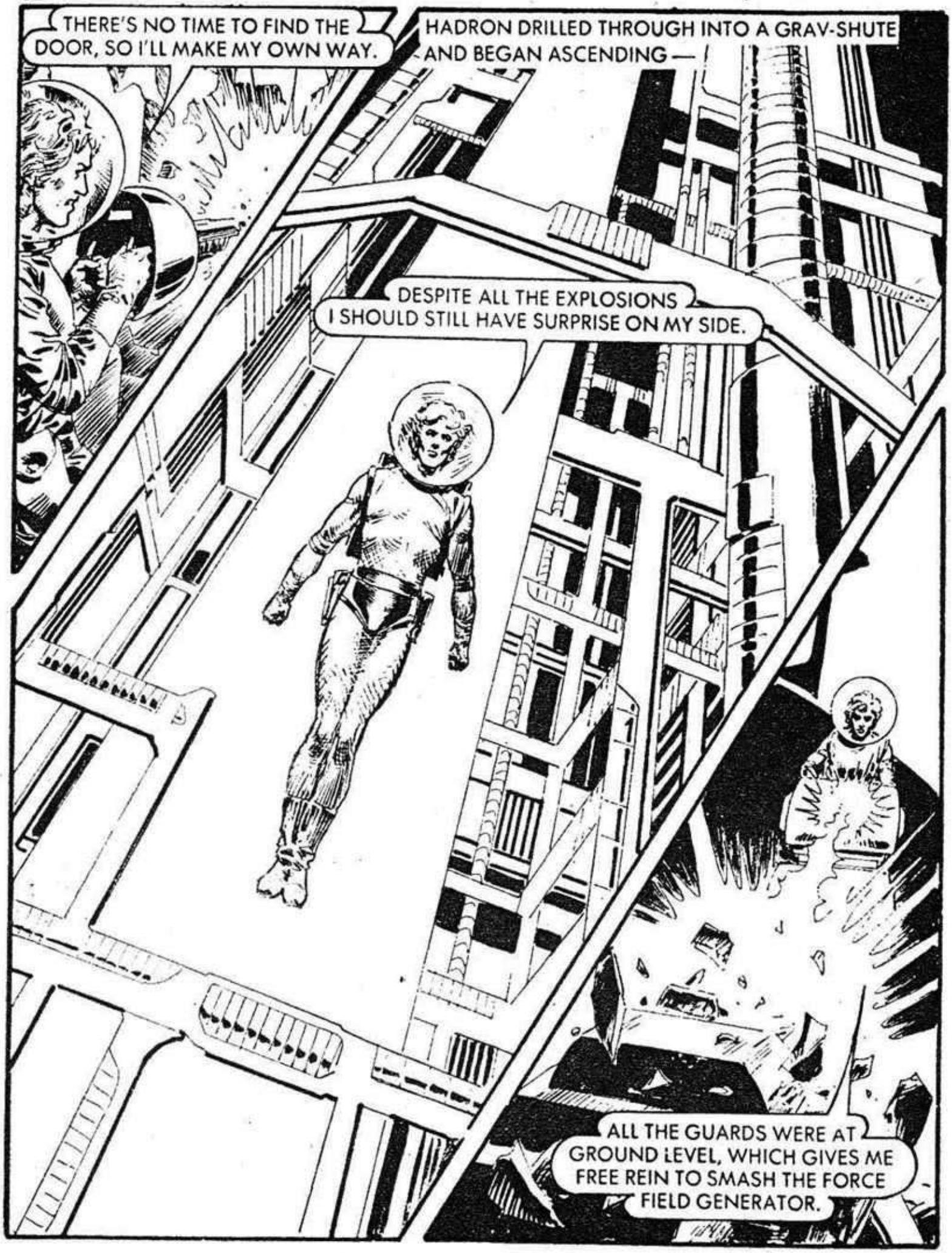
NOT FAR AWAY —
WE ARE UNDER ATTACK.


FROM THE AQUILLAN'S MOBILE COMMAND CENTRE —
FORCE FIELD ACTIVATED AND BASE SECURE.

AQUILLANS CAUGHT OUTSIDE THE CAMP WHEN THE FORCE FIELD FORMED, SUFFERED THE DEADLY FLESH-SUCKING BITE OF THE SERPENTS.

AN EXCELLENT IDEA . . . AND THIS PERSONAL PHOTON DRILL SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT.
HADRON SET OUT —
BY MY RECKONING I SHOULD BE RIGHT UNDER THE AQUILLAN BASE BY NOW!
NO SIGN OF AQUILLANS! THEY MUST ALL BE AT THE PERIMETER FORCE-FIELD WALL.

JUPE!
HARDON THREW HIS WEAPONS BAG —
BANG GOES MY BAG OF EXPLOSIVE . . . I HOPE!
THE AQUILLANS HAD NO CHANCE IN THE RESULTANT EXPLOSION.


THERE'S NO TIME TO FIND THE DOOR, SO I'LL MAKE MY OWN WAY.
HADRON DRILLED THROUGH INTO A GRAV-SHUTE AND BEGAN ASCENDING —
DESPITE ALL THE EXPLOSIONS I SHOULD STILL HAVE SURPRISE ON MY SIDE.
ALL THE GUARDS WERE AT GROUND LEVEL, WHICH GIVES ME FREE REIN TO SMASH THE FORCE FIELD GENERATOR.

THE AQUILLANS SUDDENLY FOUND THEMSELVES WITHOUT PROTECTION AGAINST THE SERPENTS.
GET BACK TO THE SHIPS AND INTO SPACE BEFORE WE'RE OVER-RUN!
BUT HADRON WAS WAITING WITH A PHASER CANNON.
AT THAT MOMENT THE FI-SCI EXPEDITION AND HER GALAC-SQUAD ESCORTS RETURNED.
COMMANDER, LOOK AT THE SCREENS—

THE AQUILLAN FORCE WAS CAUGHT IN A DEVASTATING PINCER MOVEMENT.

WE'VE GOT THEM TRAPPED!

WE SURRENDER!

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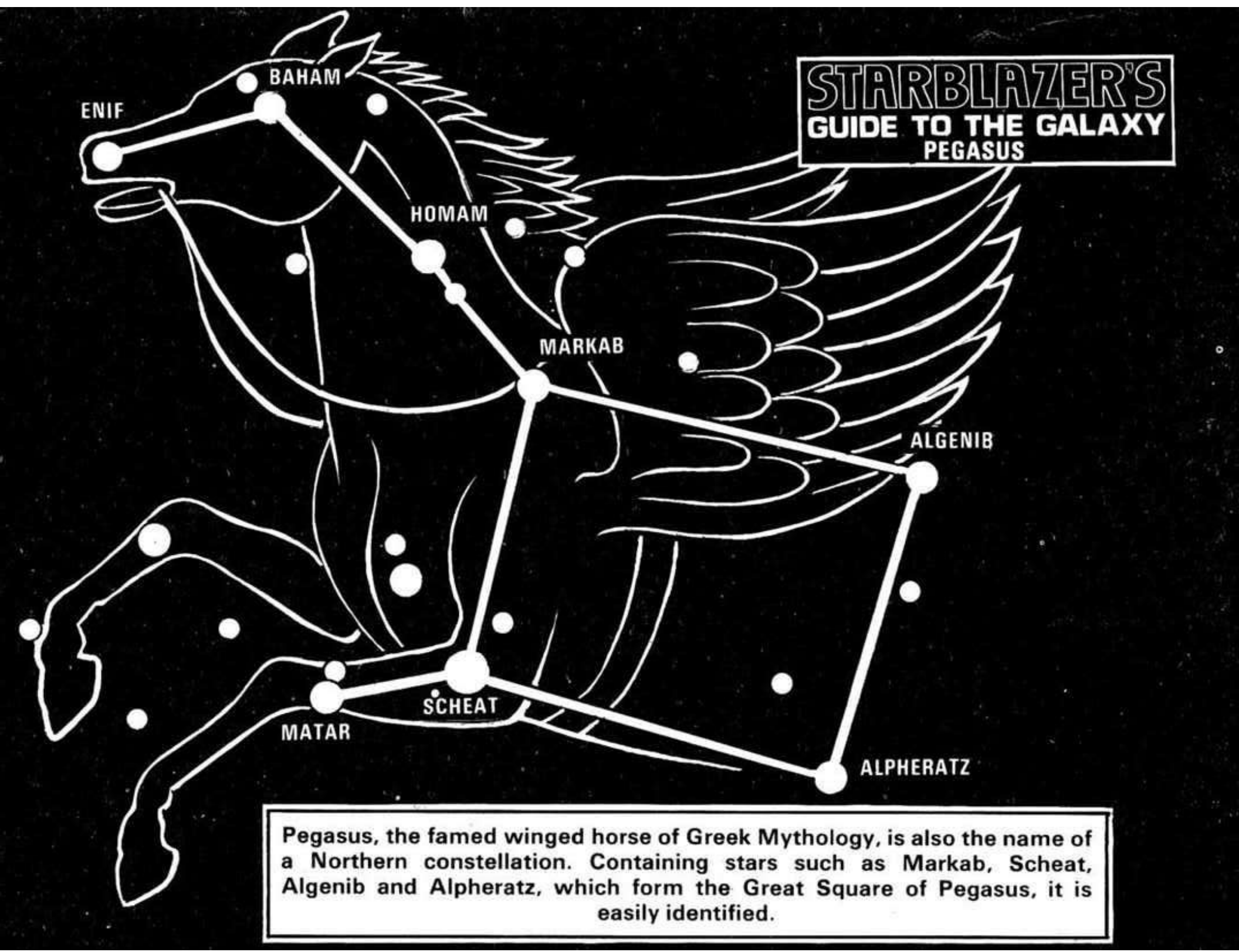
DON'T MISS THIS MONTH'S OTHER ACTION-PACKED ADVENTURE

NOW ON SALE


STARBLAZER'S
GUIDE TO THE GALAXY
PEGASUS
ENIF
BAHAM
HOMAM
MARKAB
ALGENIB
SCHEAT
MATAR
ALPHERATZ
Pegasus, the famed winged horse of Greek Mythology, is also the name of a Northern constellation. Containing stars such as Markab, Scheat, Algenib and Alpheratz, which form the Great Square of Pegasus, it is easily identified.